



Eric J. Holcomb, Governor
Terry J. Stigdon, MSN, RN, Director

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Education Services

Director



Melaina Gant is dedicated to ensuring the educational stability and success of DCS involved youth. Prior to bringing her enthusiasm for education to DCS, she taught first, second and third grade, as well as, a split classroom of second and third graders. She has been inducted into Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education and the Golden Key International Honor Society. Her Bachelor of Arts degree is from Purdue. She received her Master's in Education with specializations in both Child Development and Family and Community Services from Ashford in 2013. She was originally hired as one of the Northeast Liaisons in 2012 and was promoted to the Education Services Director in September 2014. In January, 2017, Melaina received the appointment to serve as the Co-Chair of the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana: Education Outcomes Task Force. She has spoken at the Indiana Youth Institute's Because Kids Count Conference, California's Foster Youth Education Summit, Indiana Criminal Justice Association Annual Conference, Children's Justice Act Conference, and at Georgetown discussing various educational topics pertinent to foster and at-risk youth and highlighting the positive work the DCS Education Services team does to support the academic success of Indiana's foster youth.

Central/ Hwy 40 Roadrunners



Sabrina Ellison has nine years of public education teaching experience in both inner city and rural settings. After receiving her Bachelors in Elementary Education, Sabrina spent seven years teaching in the inner city schools of Houston, Texas (2000-2007). Upon moving back to Indiana in 2007, Sabrina became a proud mother while pursuing her Master's Degree in Special Education. Sabrina received her graduate degree in 2009, and taught Developmental/Special Needs Preschool and Severe Disabilities. Sabrina received both her Bachelor's Degree and her Master's Degree from Indiana State University.



Indiana children will live in safe, healthy and supportive families and communities.



Steven Takacs has been an educator for ten years. He graduated from the University of Indianapolis in 2004 with a BA in Journalism and English. He is a licensed secondary English teacher who is also bilingual (Spanish). He has taught English and English as a Second Language in the United States and Mexico as well as undergraduate courses in Philosophy. In 2010, Steven completed his MA in Philosophy at IUPUI. In his free time, Steven enjoys reading, being outdoors, fishing, hunting and being with his family and friends.



Jay McGee has a passion for the benefits of trauma informed classrooms. Jay taught secondary social studies for one year at an alternative school in Colorado and for six years at Munster High School in Indiana. He then returned to Indiana University Bloomington to attain his principal and superintendent licenses and to earn his M.A. in School Administration and Ed.D. in Education Leadership. Jay has a wide variety of experience in K-12 education, having served as a principal in traditional schools, charter schools, an alternative school, and at Burriss Laboratory School on the campus of Ball State University. He has presented at local, state and national conferences on topics in alternative education, laboratory schools and Trauma Informed Care for Educators.

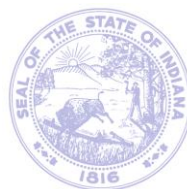


Jeri Gibson has been a Special Education teacher for eighteen years in elementary schools throughout Indianapolis and nearby cities. After serving many children in Special Education classrooms, mostly emotionally handicapped, she worked with foster children in various agencies including DCS. She recently transferred from being a Family Case Manager to an Education Liaison where she can share her expertise of both education and DCS with the entire team. Jeri received her Bachelor's degree in Education from MacMurray College.

North/Northern Power



Verne McCue has been a Special Education teacher for ten years. He has worked in both public and private education. Mr. McCue is also a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) in Grant County. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Indiana University and his Master's Degree from Ball State University.



Protecting our children, families and future



Jason Rivich has been working with children with behavioral and special needs for eight years. After receiving his Bachelor's of Science from Indiana Purdue Fort Wayne, Jason began his career in education in Warsaw Community Schools where he taught Adult Basic Education/GED preparation classes and elementary physical education to students with severe emotional disabilities. Because of his vast experience working with both adult and adolescents, he is eager to work to build educational champions for youth who have suffered through traumatic events. Outside of the office, he coaches Little League, YMCA youth basketball, and volunteers with the Boy Scouts.



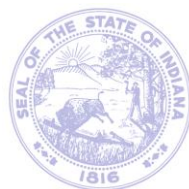
Travis Stahl has a special gift of working with children in alternative education settings. Although, he completed college with the best intentions of being a social studies teacher, he quickly found himself working as the director of an alternative school and in a detention center, not only teaching social studies but also math, English, science and electives. Travis received his degree from Indiana Purdue University Fort Wayne. He is married with two beautiful daughters.



Traci Larrison is a licensed Clinical Social Worker and a licensed School Social Worker. She was employed at Brownsburg Community School Corporation for 12 years and enjoyed working with children of all ages. Her passion is empowering youth to be successful in their education and life. Her experience working in schools allows her to truly understand the complications that occur with schools and children involved with DCS. Traci received her BSW from Illinois State and her MSW from Indiana University.



Anita Johnson has fervor that is quite evident in the field of education. Before being hired as an Education Liaison with DCS, she taught middle/high school English in the Gary and Merrillville Community School Corporations for approximately 15 years. Anita received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Journalism/English Education from Indiana State University. After graduating from Indiana State, Anita returned to her hometown of Gary, Indiana to teach. "I felt a need to return to my hometown and teach because Gary had given me a strong educational foundation that has helped me become the person I am today." In 2012, she received her Masters of Arts Degree in Adult Education from the University of Phoenix. She has been a member of several educational organizations, such as PBIS, PTA, and the Gary Reading Council. She believes the best gifts we can give to our youth are knowledge and character. Anita is married and the mother of three beautiful daughters.



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South/Southern Stars



Jeffrey Neumann is originally from LaPorte County Indiana and a graduate of New Prairie High School in the heart of the “snow zone.” Jeff is a former public school educator in the state with 8 years in the classroom and 22 years as an Elementary Principal. He has been an educator in many parts of Indiana including Kentland, Renssealer, Warsaw, and now Greenwood. Jeff states “I share the excitement of the core team of EL’s and believe the position of Educational Liaison is yet another world class intervention offering assistance to the children, and all citizens of Indiana, working with very talented DCS staff to bring the best educational opportunities to the most fragile of Indiana’s young people.” Jeff received his Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees from Indiana University. He received his Administration Certification from Purdue University.



Kelly Hargett taught for 9 years as a Special Education teacher in the private school setting. After leaving the classroom, she began working for the Department of Child Services in 2010 as a Family Case Manager in Scott County, Indiana. Kelly also worked seven years as Eligibility Caseworker Supervisor for the Division of Family and Children in the 1990s. Her diverse background in both the educational setting, as well as, the social services setting helps Kelly understand the difficulties that children in DCS care face, both academically and culturally. Kelly received her Bachelor’s of Science in Elementary Education with a Kindergarten Endorsement and her Master’s of Science in Elementary Education from Indiana University Southeast. Kelly and her husband, David, are the proud parents of daughters Caitlin, Paige, and Mallory.



Naomi Koeplin has a variety of experiences as a professional educator, teaching high school and middle school English/Language Arts in Alaska and Kentucky, teaching reading intervention for elementary students and working with early childhood programs in Arizona. Naomi received her BA in English Education from Bethel College in 2008, and her M.Ed. in Elementary Education with endorsements in Early Childhood Education and Structured English Immersion from Northern Arizona University in 2012. She moved to Bloomington, Indiana and joined the Education Services program with DCS in 2012 as an Education Liaison. Naomi embraces the incredible potential that being an Education Liaison affords to influence educational success for youth in DCS care, and to increase community collaboration and improve outcomes for children and families in Indiana. Naomi received her Master of Social Work degree with a concentration in Leadership from Indiana University in 2018 through the DCS Child Welfare Scholars’ program.



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Janessa Arney has been in the education field for six years. She graduated from the University of Southern Indiana in 2010 with a BS degree in Business Administration and in 2012 with a BS degree in Elementary Education. Janessa was inducted into Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education. She studied abroad at Harlaxton College and attributes this experience to her passion for learning and educating. She is a licensed K-6 teacher who has taught 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grades. Janessa joined the Education Services team with DCS in 2018 and is excited for the opportunity to advocate for the needs of foster youth. In her free time, Janessa enjoys traveling, reading, hiking, watching UK basketball, and spending time with family and friends.



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